

Living in the Borderlands

Intro: Welcome to the time between... It is no longer Christmas, but it isn't quite New Year's. The kids aren't in school, but school isn't over. It isn't really a vacation week, but good luck getting any work out of your employees this week. It is a time between – an odd time.

I. The Present Reality

A. I believe it was Mark Buchanan who wrote a book about Christian faith and commitment where he described a borderland between two African nations. Each nation had its own gate and guard posts but there was a large no man's land in between. That area was packed with people who had left one country but, for one reason or another, hadn't yet crossed over into the next.

1. They were literally in a land between.
2. Every nation has borders where some live in hope, some live in hopelessness, and some live in fear.
3. Societies and nations have borderlands, too. We have "between times" when we are changing and it isn't yet plain what we are going to look like when we get to wherever we are going.

B. We are between one social reality and another.

1. financial
2. social/political
3. racial (Spanish signs in Best Buy; Betty Crocker is now an amalgam of 75 different racial and ethnic backgrounds)
4. By 2020, whites will make up 50% of Americans. By some estimates, they will be the largest minority in American by 2050. (grains of salt, please)
5. Regardless, the times, they are a'changing.

C. There was a time on this earth when traditions lasted for hundreds of years. Occupations were static. There were no questions about what you wanted to be when you grew up – you would be what your fathers were or you would do the same work your mothers did.

1. Stasis, predictability... but no hope.

2. “Know your place” and “accept your place” were the main messages we passed on to our children. And, until recently, it was said to African Americans and other minorities. (Louisiana preacher)
 3. This was stasis, security, predictability, and the absence of all crisis... but no one could call it good. No one here wants to return to those days.
- D.** My father’s warning to those who fell in love on the mission field – “for the rest of your lives, one of you will not be home.” But... might that not be a good thing? (the blessings of moving on)
- E.** Some of you are living in the borderlands. You might be single, engaged, empty nesters... knowing where you are but thinking that you will probably move on to another place, another station, another situation.
1. Some of you have a job that you want to change. Others have lost their job. Some fear that they may lose their job... you are living in between time.
 2. Paul in Philippians 1:21-25.

II. A Christian Response

- A.** Judi Neal wrote a powerful book called “Edgewalkers.” They are at peace... in fact, they thrive... when they see the current realities.
1. Globalization
 2. Technology
 3. Less predictability
 4. Time poverty
 5. Spirituality, even in the workplace
- B.** What should be our Christian response to this life in the borderlands? When the world is in a time between, how should we then live?
1. Live as pilgrims. For too long, Christians have made this world their home. They have tried to manipulate governments to make Christian nations. There is a lot of good in that but there is an evil by-product: we can forget that we are strangers and pilgrims.

- a. First Peter calls us “strangers” three times. 1:1; 1:7; 2:11.
 - b. Hebrews 11 praises the great people of faith and explains how they were able to live such brave and powerful lives – they considered themselves strangers on earth. (v.13)
2. Make a commitment to live what you say you believe. “Choose you this day whom you will serve.”
- a. this is not a bargaining position, or a weekly visit, but a true commitment. (summer of 1859, Charles Blondin stretched a 3 inch rope 1200 ft. across the Niagara Falls. Balancing 200 feet in the air, he placed a wheelbarrow on the line...)
 - b. there are many things we SAY we believe in, but when the decisive moment arrives, we often cannot find the courage to actually DO them... particularly if it calls us to go out into the borderlands.
 - c. MLK Jr. said, “Our ultimate measure is not where we stand in times of comfort and convenience, but where we stand in times of challenge and controversy.” Those times are not so much death defying as they are life-defining.
 - d. In a Time Between, in the Borderlands, there is no place for a couch potato faith. There MUST be a reason God told us more than 300 times “be not afraid.” It was His most repeated commandment, and His least heard.

III. Life in the Borderlands

- A.** Luke 17:11-19. Jesus is approached by 10 lepers. He heals them and one returns. Jesus says this, “Get up and go. Your faith has made you well.” He had already been healed of his leprosy. Now, something else had happened. His faith had changed his situation. Now, he was truly healed for his sins were forgiven.
- B.** God has called us to engage this world – to enter its borderlands and offer healing and salvation to whomever are Samaritans to us. We cross any boundary and take

risks because we don't just say we believe... we get in the wheelbarrow. We believe in God more than we believe in the news, our own eyes, our own feelings, or the counsel of those around us. (the ending of Habakkuk)

C. He crossed borders when he came to us ("The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" Jn.1:14) and he crossed borders the whole time he was here. And he says "follow me."

I have decided to follow Jesus...

Psalm 23

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death, ^[a]
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

Admonition –

Here's To The Crazy Ones

Here's the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not are fond of rules. And they have no respect for status quo. You can praise, disagree with them, quote them. Disbelieve, glorify them or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. But they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones that do.--Jack Kerouac, On the Road

Paul's statements about being a Jew to the Jews and to the Romans, a Roman.